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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4724
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0628
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SUBJECT: NEPALI CONGRESS PARTY "INCLUSIVE" IN EASTERN NEPAL

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Prime Minister's Party Inclusive, Sort Of

11. (C) On December 2, Emboff accompanied Sujata Koirala, Head of the Nepali Congress (NC) Department of International Relations and daughter of Prime Minister GP Koirala, to a political program in Inaruwa, Sunsari District in south-eastern Nepal. The NC leaders of the rural district discussed many of their problems -- health care, education, drinking water, irrigation water, and ethnic-based conflict -- with Koirala and Emboff. Party leaders in Sunsari included women, youth, Muslims (including a representative from the local madrassa), Hindus, dalits (low caste persons who form a large portion of the population of the district), teachers, and trade unionists. After the program, these representatives told Emboff that they felt the NC actually represented and responded to their needs. The district is represented in Parliament by the Prime Minister himself, so it is not surprising that the government provides for their needs. Despite these testimonials, it was noteworthy that Ms. Koirala spoke to all the people gathered at the program in Nepali using informal forms of address and language, while everyone referred to her using very formal and respectful forms of address and language.

Nepotism and Party Politics

12. (C) Nepotism was much in evidence during the short visit. Sujata Koirala is planning to run in the upcoming Constituent Assembly elections for the seat her father currently occupies. The NC District President in Sunsari District had appointed his son to be the NC Secretary in the district. Two of the District President's brothers also served as appointed leaders of the party. It was clear as well that political parties were expected to provide goods and services to the community in exchange for political support. Ms. Koirala pointedly told Emboff that she would need to provide some of the things the people were asking for closer to the election so that they would vote for her. The next day, she planned to give two wheelchairs to a hospital in the district.

Comment

13. (C) Although at least on the surface the Nepali Congress includes people from various ethnic and class groups in Sunsari, it is also clear that party politics continue to suffer from nepotism and caste-based discrimination. All of the main party leaders in the district (including the Koiralas) are high-caste Brahmin-Chettri, and that does not appear to be set to change in the near future. We will continue to emphasize to the parties that inclusive politics are an important part of democracy and necessary to create a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic Nepal. It is unclear whether Sujata Koirala taking the place of GP Koirala in the Constituent Assembly would mean retirement from politics for the Prime Minister.

MORIARTY